

Memorandum

To: Planning Commission

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Date: January 14, 2015

Subject: **Old Town Historic Core Plan**

MEETING PURPOSE

The purpose of this study session is to provide an introduction to the background and purpose for the Old Town Historic Core Plan and seek the Planning Commission's input and questions regarding progress to date and any additional topics that should be addressed.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Staff began activities to inform development of the Plan in January 2014 (see enclosed map for area). The purpose is to establish a long-term plan for the historic central core of the City's first business district with the significant participation of a property and business owners and community stakeholders.

The scope and approach for this Plan is based on feedback from the 2013 joint City Council and Landmark Commission meeting and interests expressed by property and business owners. This Plan will address elements including the streetscape, character and design, opportunities for art, a unique marketing and event plan, and opportunities for grant funding and community partnerships, all toward the goal of enhanced economic and neighborhood vitality. The Plan development process includes an integrated approach to tie together the Historic Core with other recent and upcoming Downtown projects such as the Downtown Park, Cleveland Streetscape and the Redmond Central Connector (RCC).

This is one of the topics on the 2014-15 Comprehensive Plan docket since development and adoption of the Plan will include amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

OUTREACH TO DATE AND COMPLETED MILESTONES

During the past several months, staff has completed the following to gain additional knowledge of the existing conditions and interests in the Historic Core and to inform development of the Plan:

- Staff interviews and consults regarding existing conditions, recent and planned capital improvements, concerns such as infrastructure needs along Leary Way and opportunities such as with regard to the Downtown Park;
- Property and business owner interviews and consults regarding interests, operational aspects and preliminary concepts;
- Field inventory and observation of existing conditions, architectural designs, and community interactions with the built environment;
- Interviews with staff from the consulting firm Makers who are developing recommendations for updating the Zoning Code's urban design standards for development projects; and
- Community engagement including an online questionnaire (January to June), Feet First Walk & Talk (June), Derby Days Visual Preference Wall (July), and online IdeaScale conversation (August to November), and information table at Redmond Historical Society's Saturday Speakers Series (September).

This project is also highlighted at redmond.gov/history; included in monthly, neighborhood e-newsletters; periodically noted in the weekly Downtown Business email; and promoted via neighborhood Facebook pages.

OBSERVATIONS AND KEY ELEMENTS

Significant observations to date include:

- Business owners would welcome additional opportunities to program the Historic Core, such as with food, music, performance, themed walking, and other events. Businesses also hope to explore parklets on a pilot basis, such as those being piloted in Seattle and San Francisco. A parklet is an extension of the sidewalk into the street, exchanging private auto space for additional public gathering space.
(http://www.seattle.gov/transportation/parklets_history.htm)
- Property as well as business owners continue to look forward to construction of the Downtown Park and would like to plan for increased connection to and with the Park. Concurrently, several remain concerned about parking availability while recognizing opportunities provided by the new RCC parking lot.
- Alleys serve an important function for businesses as well as for pedestrian travel and could be enhanced to foster additional community interaction.
- Irrigation and electrical outlets are unavailable along Leary Way such as to support City-sponsored, flower containers and seasonal lights. A partnership with local businesses could be established for installing and maintaining desired accent vegetation and winter decor.

- The recently installed streetlights along Cleveland Street are a stark contrast to the faded paint and globes on the streetlights in Old Town. The streetlights in Old Town also no longer meet the City's energy efficiency standard and due to the cost and process of refurbishment, would be more cost effective to replace.
- Though the existing sidewalks require cleaning and some repair, the design and width are consistent with the Historic Core's long-range vision.
- Historic Core character could be enhanced through needed utilitarian amenities including bike parking and waste receptacles such that the Core would feature a distinctive and recognizable character.
- Current architectural design varies significantly and yet, provides a flavor of the early 1900's. New construction could capitalize on existing historic architecture, blending details with careful use of new material and other design treatments.

Based on this, the key proposed elements for the Old Town Historic Core Plan include:

- **Character** - Establish the foundation from which complementary development design standards will be developed and provide guidance for other elements that contribute to the character, such as art, landscaping, and monumentation for landmark structures;
- **Public realm improvements:** Confirm and refine as needed the standards for public realm improvements, and identify needed investments;
- **Economic Vibrancy** - Provide an implementation strategy for supporting and increasing economic vibrancy for Old Town's Historic Core;
- **Promotion** - Engage often with business proprietors, property owners, and the community; and
- **Coordination** – Collaborate with and coordinate Historic Core elements with other Downtown plans and projects as well as in the context of surrounding neighborhoods.

The Historic Core Plan is an overarching plan that will define the Core and provide context for the deliverables below. Preparation of these will be phased and will begin with the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

- Amendments to Comprehensive Plan – recognizing Historic Core and associated policies;
- Amendment to Redmond Zoning Code;
 - Historic Core design standards for development;
 - Historic Core Streetscape standards;
 - Downtown Pedestrian System map and code;
- Amendments to Historic Core Sign code in the Municipal Code;
- Amendments to wayfinding and place making standards;
- Historic Core Brand, Marketing, and Event Plan – includes place-based and utilitarian branding, a Historic Core logo palette, Historic Core webpage, coordination with other promotional programs such as Experience Redmond, and two-year event plan;

- Coordination with, supplements to, and amendments to related plans such as the Strategic Art Plan and Pedestrian/Bicycle Plan;
- Developer, investor, and proprietor guides regarding property, programs, and grant opportunities specific to the Historic Core; and

NEXT STEPS AND SCHEDULE

Staff will continue meeting periodically with property and business owners regarding proposed elements of the Plan, including design standards for development projects in the Historic Core based on Makers' recommendations.

Related to this Plan are other Downtown projects such as the Cleveland Streetscape, Couplet Conversion, Gilman Street Master Plan, Downtown Park Master Plan, and overall Design Standards update. Staff plans to include additional information about related projects in the future so that Commission's review will include this broader context.

Planning Commission's formal review and public hearing for the design standards and other first phase companion amendments to policy and code that will be part of the Old Town Historic Core Plan are planned for June and July 2015. Prior to that, staff will schedule additional updates and consults with the Planning Commission and other City boards and committees such as the Arts and Culture Commission, Parks and Trails Commission, Landmark Commission/Design Review Board, and Pedestrian/Bicycle Advisory Committee.

The area for this Plan is the City's Historic Core and one of the elements of this Plan involves updates to the Zoning Code design standards for development projects. Staff is looking at opportunities during the first and second quarter for one or more joint meetings of the Planning Commission and other boards and committees, particularly the Landmark Commission/Design Review Board, as a venue to share perspectives regarding the Historic Core's unique nature and proposed Plan elements.

Please contact Kimberly Dietz, 425-556-2415, kdietz@redmond.gov and Sarah Stiteler, 425-556-2469, ssiteler@redmond.gov with questions and for additional information.

ENCLOSURES

Historic Core Map